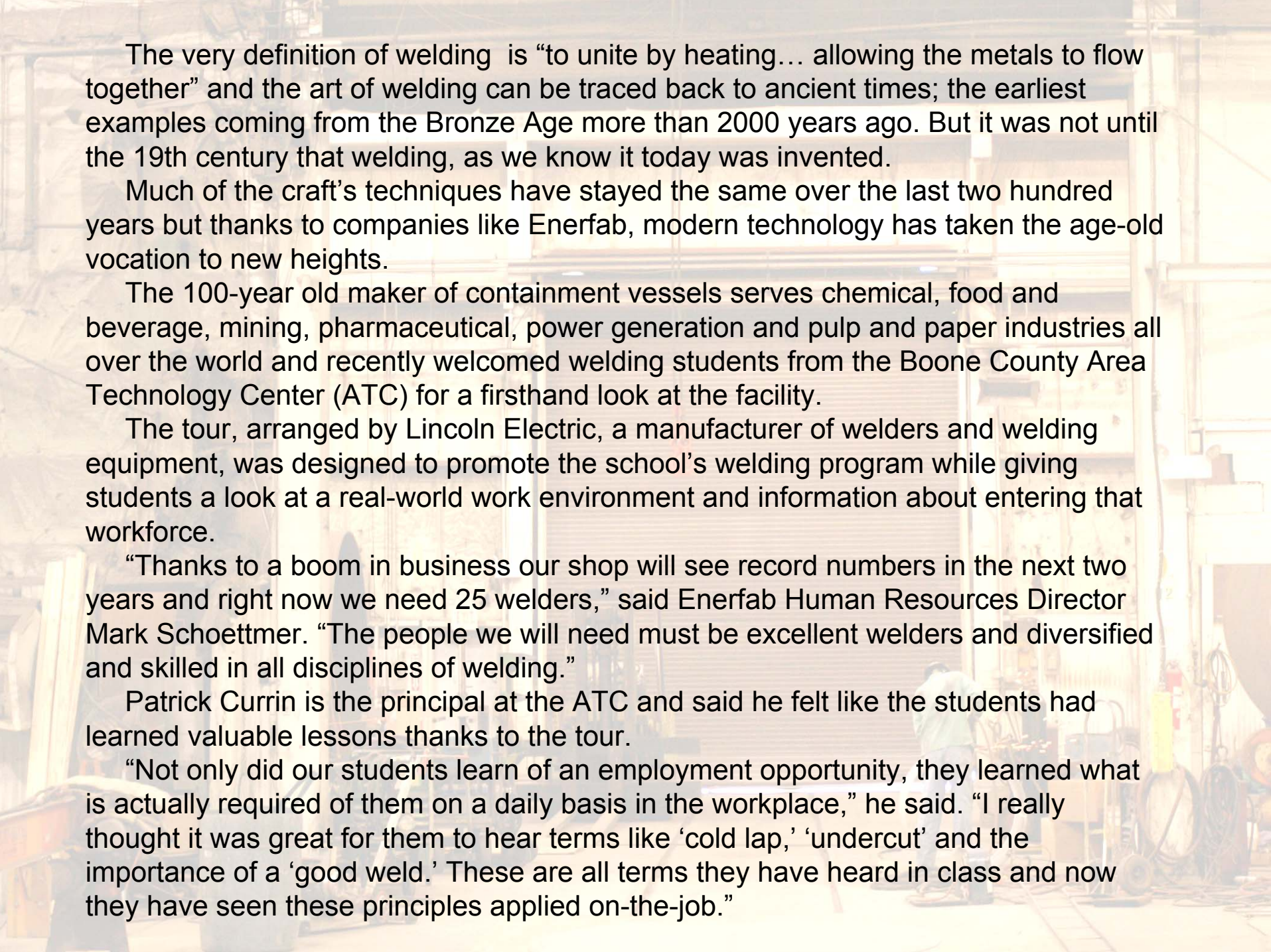


A photograph of a welder in a large industrial facility. The welder is wearing a yellow helmet and a blue jacket, kneeling on the floor and working on a large metal plate. The background shows a large room with corrugated metal walls, various equipment, and a doorway leading to another area. The text is overlaid on the image.

BOONE COUNTY AREA TECHNOLOGY CENTER STUDENTS TOUR ENERFAB

**WELDING STUDENTS
GET A FIRSTHAND LOOK
AT AN AGE-OLD
VOCATION TAKEN TO
NEW HEIGHTS BY WAY
OF MODERN
TECHNOLOGY.**



The very definition of welding is “to unite by heating... allowing the metals to flow together” and the art of welding can be traced back to ancient times; the earliest examples coming from the Bronze Age more than 2000 years ago. But it was not until the 19th century that welding, as we know it today was invented.

Much of the craft’s techniques have stayed the same over the last two hundred years but thanks to companies like Enerfab, modern technology has taken the age-old vocation to new heights.

The 100-year old maker of containment vessels serves chemical, food and beverage, mining, pharmaceutical, power generation and pulp and paper industries all over the world and recently welcomed welding students from the Boone County Area Technology Center (ATC) for a firsthand look at the facility.

The tour, arranged by Lincoln Electric, a manufacturer of welders and welding equipment, was designed to promote the school’s welding program while giving students a look at a real-world work environment and information about entering that workforce.

“Thanks to a boom in business our shop will see record numbers in the next two years and right now we need 25 welders,” said Enerfab Human Resources Director Mark Schoettmer. “The people we will need must be excellent welders and diversified and skilled in all disciplines of welding.”

Patrick Currin is the principal at the ATC and said he felt like the students had learned valuable lessons thanks to the tour.

“Not only did our students learn of an employment opportunity, they learned what is actually required of them on a daily basis in the workplace,” he said. “I really thought it was great for them to hear terms like ‘cold lap,’ ‘undercut’ and the importance of a ‘good weld.’ These are all terms they have heard in class and now they have seen these principles applied on-the-job.”

The tour included the traditional welding shop and the enormous fabrication area where most of the construction on the company's vessels takes place.

Phil Mortashed is a welding technician for Enerfab and stressed to the students the importance of learning all they can at this point in their school careers.

"Pay attention to everything your instructor is teaching. Those skills will be very valuable in a place like this," he said. "Our customers expect nothing but the best and there hasn't been a job come through yet that we couldn't do."

Welding Instructor Dutch Kennedy said the students were impressed with the tour and felt like it had made a big impression on them.

"The trip was just what the doctor ordered in getting our students to understand what is out there for them in the world of welding," he said. "They realize that by putting a lot of effort into what they are learning now, it will pay off in the future. I think it was great for them to hear many of the same things we have talked about in class from someone in the industry."

Anna Peecher is a junior welding student at the school and thinks welding may hold a career for her someday.

"My grandfather owned a welder and it was something that always interested me, so when I found out about the class at the ATC, I wanted to give it a try," she said. "This was my first time out in a workplace and I was very surprised at the variety of things they do and all that they make. Working in a place like this would be something I would be interested in doing after I'm out of school."

Lincoln Electric's Ed Varekojis said the need for welders is being felt all across the country.

"According to the American Welding Society, the welding industry as a whole will need 50,000 to 60,000 welders in the next two to four years," he said. "Most shops are already looking."



According to the U.S. Department of Labor, job prospects for welders should be excellent over the next several years as employers report difficulty finding enough qualified people.

In addition, many openings are expected to arise as a large number of workers retire over the next decade.

Technology is also creating more uses for welding in the workplace and expanding employment opportunities.

Schoetmer left the students with words of advise and encouragement as the tour ended.

“Remember to make a good first impression when you walk through the door looking for a job,” he said. “And, I hope to see many of you in the future.”



Boone Co. ATC Principal Patrick Currin watches an Enerfab welding technician during the facility tour.



Enerfab's Mark Schoettmer, second from right, describes some of the liner material used in the company's vessels.



Welding Student Anna Peecher takes a photo of one of the enormous vessels that have become the trademark of Enerfab.